

Case Study: West Suffolk Council - Multiple Wins from Renewables Investment



Image courtesy of West Suffolk Council and Denny Bros

West Suffolk Council is demonstrating that a long-term investment programme in renewable energy can deliver financial stability for the Council and wider benefits to local businesses and communities.

The Council has been investing in renewable energy since 2011. Its flagship is Toggam Solar Farm, near Lakenheath which is an example of how the public sector can invest in energy generation to create income for essential council services and become a leader in carbon reduction. Purchased by the Council in 2016, the 12.4MW site generates around 12,000MWh of electricity each year. Income from the solar farm in 2019-20 was £1.55m, and after accounting for the capital outlay, delivered a net income of £565,000 to fund local services.

Alongside Toggam Solar, the Council has developed its *Solar for Business* service. This sees the Council fund and develop solar PV schemes hosted by local businesses and community groups, who then benefit from the power at a discounted price compared to their normal grid supplier.

Andy Oswald, who manages the Council's energy generation, sees this as a way of building long-term partnerships with local business and communities to give them low carbon energy as well as cost certainty.

Andy says, "We have over 50 businesses and communities hosting our solar panels. They like working with us because we give them confidence that their project is well researched and installed by a vetted supply chain and is low risk once the panels are installed because we manage everything.

"We give our Solar for Business hosts the confidence that our schemes give them cheaper power than their normal energy supplier and, of course, it's 100% green. For the Council, our renewable energy investments have really helped to cushion the impact of public-sector grant cuts, as well as helping with our wider Climate Emergency commitment."

Through its commitment to renewable energy generation, West Suffolk Council is offsetting around 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually, and provides enough power to run 3,500 homes.